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## **NJ TRANSIT, PRUDENTIAL JOINTLY LAUNCH "THE LOOP" MINIBUS SERVICE IN NEWARK**

**NEWARK, NJ, October 14, 1997** -- A new minibus service that will make it more convenient to take public transportation to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark -- as well as to businesses, restaurants and other points of interest in the city -- was jointly launched today by NJ TRANSIT and The Prudential Insurance Company of America.

Following a ceremony outside Newark Penn Station, State Transportation Commissioner and NJ TRANSIT Board Chairman John J. Haley Jr., Newark Mayor Sharpe James, NJ TRANSIT Executive Director Shirley A. DeLibero, Michele Darling, Executive Vice President of Human Resources for Prudential and other state and local dignitaries boarded a colorful minibus for the inaugural trip on the new service -- called "The Loop." The service is being funded jointly by Prudential and NJ TRANSIT under a public-private partnership.

Transportation Commissioner Haley said: "NJ TRANSIT is proud to establish this new public-private partnership as part of Governor Whitman's urban revitalization program for the City of Newark. This new service will not only provide transportation options for patrons attending shows at the performing arts center when it opens on Saturday, but will enable workers and residents from Newark's business district to more conveniently travel between the city's downtown area and the Ironbound section at lunchtime."

Newark Mayor Sharpe James said: "Thanks to Governor Christine Whitman and a public/private partnership between Prudential, NJ TRANSIT and the City of Newark, residents, visitors, students and those who work in Newark will have a chance to enjoy our many sights and attractions."

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"This service will be especially beneficial in transporting people to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, as well as getting them to the Newark Museum, Bell Atlantic, Prudential, PSE&G, the Gateway Complex and Ferry Street. I am confident that when the shuttle system's initial trial period is over, the system will be continued because it is a quick and efficient way for persons to get around downtown Newark," Mayor James added.

NJ TRANSIT Executive Director DeLibero said: "This unique public-private partnership with Prudential will encourage residents and guests who plan to visit the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and the city's other cultural attractions to take public transportation. The Loop will also be attractive for employees of the many corporations in downtown Newark who wish to lunch in the downtown, Ironbound or NJPAC's new restaurant."

Patricia Ryan, wife of Prudential Chairman & CEO Arthur F. Ryan, said: "Our vision is to see the Loop expand to become the major people mover in downtown Newark. This new service has the potential to really open up the city." Mrs. Ryan is a member of the Connection Newark Executive Committee, chairperson of its Transportation Committee and a member of the NJPAC Women's Board Executive Committee.

The new service will use five 20-passenger minibuses colorfully painted in purple green and orange, to provide regularly scheduled service during the evening and mid-day hours. Bus stops will be located at several key sites, including: Prudential, New Jersey Historical Society; New Jersey Performing Arts Center; Newark Museum; Newark Library; Halsey Street shopping district; the restaurant district along Ferry and Prospect streets; and Penn and Broad Street rail stations in Newark. Each stop along the 2.8-mile route will be identified by a distinctive sign bearing the Loop logo.

In September, the NJ TRANSIT Board of Directors contracted with the Newark-Orange-Elizabeth Bus Co. Inc. (ONE) of Newark to operate the service through June 1998 at a cost not to exceed \$500,000. Prudential has pledged an initial \$200,000 contribution to defray the cost of the service with the remainder offset by NJ TRANSIT.

The shuttle will operate every 12 minutes during the mid-day period from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays and between 4 p.m. and 9 p.m. weekdays. In addition, the service will operate from 12:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. on weekends during performing arts center performances. At the conclusion of performances, shuttle buses will return patrons to the train stations. The complete Loop route is timed at 23 minutes.

The one-way shuttle fare will be \$1, with passengers age 62 and over and people with disabilities able to ride for 45 cents during off-peak hours and on weekends. NJ TRANSIT monthly bus cards will not be accepted.

The shuttle service is the first phase of what is envisioned as a more expansive endeavor. The second phase, scheduled to begin July 1, 1998, is a contemplated all-day shuttle proposed by Connection Newark, a non-profit community group. It would operate through the downtown and be funded through private donations. Continuation and possible expansion of the service will depend on a successful pilot project and on the ability of Connection Newark to attract additional funding from other sponsors.

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